

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 00891 162001Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----024253 170301Z /41

R 161855Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9921
INFO ADDIS ABABA 798
AMEMBASSY ANTANARIVO
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 0891

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, ET, SO, US
SUBJECT: ENCOURAGEMENT OF ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI NEGOTIATIONS
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REF: A. STATE 11011, B. ROME 20747(NOTAL), C. 77 STATE 303475(NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY STRONGLY CONCURS THAT ITALIANS BE CONSULTED AND INVOLVED IN ANY PEACE INITIATIVE IN THE HORN. WITH ITALY'S HISTORIC TIES IN EREA AND CURRENT INTERESTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF LOCAL ITALIAN COMMUNITIES IN MIND, GOI HAS CAREFULLY MAIN-

TAINED GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA AND APPARENTLY IS NOT PERCEIVED BY EITHER AS HAVING TAKEN SIDES IN CONFLICT. ITALIANS WOULD THUS BE NATURAL CHOICE TO ASSIST MEDIATION EFFORTS. IN ADDITION, THERE IS NO LACK OF WILLINGNESS, AT LEAST AT HIGHER LEVELS OF MFA: NEWLY-ARRIVED SECRETARY GENERAL MALFATTI HAS ALREADY APPROACHED AMBASSADOR ABOUT POSSIBLE ITALIAN INITIATIVE TO BRING ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTERS TOGETHER FOR TALKS (REF.B). FACT THAT WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING MORE ABOUT IDEA MAY BE DUE NOT ONLY TO CAUTIOUS U.S. REACTION (REF.C). BUT ALSO TO SKEPTICISM ON PART OF MFA WORKING LEVEL, WHICH APPARENTLY HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED BEFORE MALFATTI RAISED PROPOSAL WITH AMBASSADOR. WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO BELIEVE TIME FOR OUTSIDE INITIATIVE NOT RIPE BECAUSE BOTH SIDES IN CONFLICT ARE STILL HOPING FOR DECISIVE MILITARY SUCCESS BEFORE GOING TO NEGOTIATING TABLE. IN ADDITION OFFICIALS BELIEVE ITALIAN INITIATIVE WOULD GET NOWHERE IN VIEW OF FAILURE OF EVEN NIGERIANS TO GET TWO SIDES TOGETHER UNDER OAU AUSPICES. NEVERTHELESS, WE FEEL THAT ALL LEVELS OF GOI WOULD VIEW FAVORABLY BROAD CONCERTED EFFORT TO BRING TWO SIDES TOGETHER AND WOULD BE OF REAL ASSISTANCE IN U.S. EFFORTS. GARDNER

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